

Police Power and Violence in Nick Stone's *Dear Martin*

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Abstract

This article explored the interplay of police power and violence against African-Americans in Nick Stone's *Dear Martin* (2017). Qualitative content analysis reveals the nuanced experiences of the main characters as they navigate racial identity, police violence, and social justice, reclaiming their humanity and challenging dominant narratives. Through a critical race theory framework, the article analyses thematic representations of systemic racism, police power, and violence, highlighting how Black identity is criminalised and devalued. The article demonstrates how contemporary African American literature is a powerful tool for resistance, amplifying marginalised voices and advocating for radical change. It contributes to ongoing conversations on racial justice, police reform, and the African-American experience, emphasising the urgent need for policy changes and social reforms to protect Black lives.

Keywords: African Americans, Criminal Systemic Injustice, Identity, Police Power, Racism, Violence

Introduction

Police power and violence have long been interconnected with issues of identity, disproportionately affecting African Americans due to deeply entrenched historical, social, and institutional factors. The legacy of racism, rooted in slavery and Jim Crow laws, perpetuates systemic racism, fueling racial profiling and stereotypes that underpin police violence. Police power and violence perpetuate harmful narratives that criminalise blackness and devalue Black lives. In response, African Americans reclaim their identity through self-affirmation, empowerment, community solidarity, support, and resistance against systemic oppression.

African Americans have a long and rich history that has shaped the cultural and political landscape of the United States. African Americans are diverse people with a complex history and culture. African Americans have roots in many African ethnic groups, including Yoruba, Igbo, Kongo, and others. Meyers (1994) states that when Africans were brought to the Americas as enslaved people, they were taken from different regions of Africa, which resulted in a mix of

African cultures and ethnicities among African Americans. Many enslaved people brought to the United States came from the West African region known as the Slaves Coast, which included modern-day Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana.

African Americans are descended from Africans who were brought to the Americas as enslaved people during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Thomas (1997) states that the transatlantic slave trade was the forced migration of millions of Africans to the Americas from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Over several centuries, an estimated 12 to 15 million Africans were transported to the Americas as enslaved people, with most going to the Caribbean and South America and a significant number also going to the United States (Elkins, 1959).

The Transatlantic Slave Trade had a devastating effect on African Americans. It resulted in the loss of millions of Africans from their homes, families, and cultures. This led to a loss of freedom and self-determination, as they were forced into slavery and subjected to brutal physical and mental abuse. Enslaved people often endured harsh working conditions and inadequate nutrition and were separated from their families, with husbands, wives, and children sold to different owners (Curtain, 1969). African Americans have developed unique spiritual and religious practices, including African-based religions like voodoo and Santeria and forms of Christianity that blend African and European traditions. They have also significantly contributed to American music and art, including jazz, blues, gospel

and hip-hop, literature, theatre, and visual arts (Ford, 2012).

African Americans have demonstrated remarkable resistance and resilience in the face of racism and oppression throughout history. Lusane (2012) notes that from the Underground Railroad to the Civil Rights movement, African Americans have organised and fought against racism and discrimination. It is also note worthy that, "African American writers, artists, and scholars have used their work to challenge racism and celebrate black culture" (Wright, 2004, p.16). This shows that African Americans have leveraged their platforms to combat racism and uplift Black culture. They challenge dominant narratives through literature, art, and scholarship and promote representation, diversity, and inclusivity. By celebrating Black experiences and perspectives, these individuals counteract harmful stereotypes and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of African American identity. Their work fosters dialogue, raises awareness, and advocates for social justice, ultimately enriching American culture and society.

African American literature is the body of literature in the United States by writers of African descent. African American literature begins with the work of late 18th-century writers such as Phillips Wheatle (Bryant, 1960). African American literature has generally focused on the role of African Americans within the larger American society and what it means to be an American. Raboteau states that "All African American literary study speaks to the deeper meaning of the African-American presence in this nation, (Raboteau, 1978 p.18).

African American literature spans several periods and trends, from slave narratives to the Harlem Renaissance. The slave narrative genre, exemplified by Douglass's (1845) and Jacobs's (1861) works, highlighted the humanity of enslaved people and challenged pro-slavery propaganda.

The aim of this article is to challenge police power and violence against African Americans in Nick Stone's *Dear Martin*. The article explores how contemporary African American novels adapt traditional literary strategies to address the ongoing crisis of police violence and systemic racism. Building on a rich legacy of protest literature, Nick

Stone's *Dear Martin* (2017) is a powerful example of literary activism in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement. The novel intersects identity and police power through unique narrative approaches, illuminating themes of racial prejudice, police violence, and political awakening. By enabling personal voice and empowerment, Stone's work continues a long African American literature tradition that challenges injustice and advocates for social change.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

One of the essence or functions of literature is to comment and provide perspectives on societal issues. African American writers have not failed to acknowledge in their works the agony and misery of the blacks as a result of the police power and violence. The police violence against black people has attracted lots of critical comments both within and outside of literature. Police violence against African Americans is a complex and troubling issue that has been a part of American society for centuries. It involves instances of excessive force, brutality, harassment, and deadly encounters that disproportionately target people of colour, particularly African Americans.

Identity plays a significant role in police violence against African American communities, as entrenched racial profiling and stereotypes perpetuate harmful assumptions about Black people. Deep-seated biases rooted in historical narratives of white supremacy associate blackness with criminality, danger, and inferiority. This toxic intersection of racism and identity leads police to disproportionately target, stop, and use force against African Americans, often based on pretextual stops or minor infractions.

The consequences are devastating: black individuals are more likely to be perceived as threats rather than victims and are frequently subjected to excessive force, wrongful arrests, and fatal shootings. According to the Washington Post's database on police shootings, in 2020, Black people accounted for 25% of people shot and killed by police despite comprising only 13% of the US population. Data show that Black individuals are more likely to be

stopped and three times more likely to be killed by police than Whites. It is also stated that "black individuals are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than White individuals" (Kriegel & Warchol, 2017, P. 12).

Mapping Police Violence, in 2024, reported that 99% of police killings result in no officer being convicted. This staggering statistics reveals the police power within law enforcement. As The National Institute of Justice (NIJ, USA) notes, police power is the authority given to police officers to keep communities safe, prevent crime, enforce laws, maintain order, and protect people and property. This power is typically exercised through patrols and surveillance, traffic stops and searches, arrests and detentions, use of force (batons, pepper spray, firearms), and investigations and interrogations. Police power is meant to be used responsibly and reasonably, respecting citizens' rights and freedoms. Davis adds that, "The power of the police to enforce racial hierarchy and maintain social control is exercised through rituals of humiliation, rituals of exclusion, and rituals of violence" (Davis, 2003, p. 18). This quote highlights how police power perpetuates systemic racism, directly impacting African Americans' identity. Through rituals of humiliation (e.g., stop-and-frisk, racial profiling), exclusion (e.g., redlining, segregation), and violence (e.g., police brutality), the police reinforce harmful stereotypes and limit Black people's access to resources and opportunities.

Police violence is usually applied in the context of causing physical harm to a person. police violence is defined as "any action by law enforcement officers that results in harm or trauma, whether physical, emotional, or psychological, to civilians" (Vitale, 2017 p. 34). This shows that the action involves excessive force through intimidation tactics beyond the scope of officially sanctioned police procedure. This resonates with Smith (2019) who describes police violence as "physical force or intimidation by officers of the law, often involving excessive use of force beyond that which is reasonably necessary to accomplish the officers' lawful duties" (p. 67). Police violence is the excessive, unreasonable, and unjustified use of force by law enforcement officers that often causes long-

term physical and psychological trauma and, in some cases, death.

African American literature is a powerful tool for social commentary, with writers drawing from personal experiences to address pressing issues. Police violence has emerged as a pervasive theme, reflecting the ongoing struggles of African Americans against systemic racial inequality. This literary recurrence mirrors the grim reality of racial tensions in the US. As society evolves, so does the literary landscape, incorporating new concerns and motifs that echo the changing experiences of African American communities. Through their works, writers spark critical discussions, resonating with readers and fueling the quest against police power and violence.

Hernández's review of *American Street* (2017) by Ibi Zoboi highlights the novel's powerful portrayal of police violence as a lived experience for many immigrants, particularly in marginalised communities. Fabiola's journey to Detroit serves as a stark representation of the precariousness of life for many immigrants, who must contend with the constant fear of police violence. Hernández notes, "Zoboi illuminates the harrowing reality of police violence as a lived experience for many immigrants, and the urgent need for reform and justice within American society and law enforcement" (p. 25).

The review also explores the impact of police violence on the emotional and psychological well-being of immigrants. The characters in the novel grapple with fear, anxiety, and mistrust, which is compounded by the ever-present possibility of police violence. Hernández writes, "Through this nuanced and empathetic portrayal, Zoboi highlights the far-reaching effects of police violence on communities, beyond the physical harm it inflicts" (p. 28).

Hernández's review emphasises the immediate dangers posed by police violence, as well as the longer-term consequences on immigrants' mental health and well-being. Immigrants must confront not just the physical threat of police violence but also the psychological and emotional toll that this systemic violence can have on their mental health and overall well-being.

West (2020) reviews *The New Jim Crow* by Alexander, which sheds light on how the criminal justice system perpetuates state-sanctioned violence against Black bodies. West notes, "Alexander's writing is clear, concise, and accessible, making the book an invaluable resource for scholars, activists, and everyday citizens"(p.12). The reviewer praises Alexander's ability to "connect the dots between seemingly disparate issues," revealing how police violence, mass incarceration, and voter suppression are all part of a more extensive system of oppression.

West quotes Alexander's powerful critique of the criminal justice system, which "criminalises Blackness and legitimises police brutality"(p.22). The reviewer also highlights Alexander's use of "historical context, legal analysis, and personal narratives" to create a comprehensive and emotionally resonant narrative.

According to West, *The New Jim Crow* is a "seminal work that has reshaped our understanding of systemic racism and police violence"(p.23). The reviewer concludes that Alexander's masterpiece is a "testament to the power of scholarship, activism, and storytelling" and a "call to action for anyone committed to building a more just and equitable society"(p.23).

Smith (2021) reviews Nic Stone's *Dear Martin* as a novel that explores the complexities of systemic racism, police violence, and identity through the eyes of its protagonist, Justyce McAllister. She notes that "the novel's epistolary format, comprising Justyce's letters to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., serves as a powerful tool for introspection and social commentary, laying bare the nuances of racial identity and the struggles of growing up black in America," (p.23). As she further observes, "Stone's portrayal of micro aggressions and implicit bias is particularly noteworthy, as seen in the pivotal scene where Justyce is wrongly accused by Officer Castillo, highlighting the devastating consequences of unchecked assumptions and biases,"(p.54).

Brooks (2022) reviews *Dear Martin* Nic Stone as a novel that makes a significant contribution to the issue of racism, joining the ranks of notable works like Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give* and Jason

Reynolds' *All American Boys*. He praises the novel as an "exploration of the Black experience in America, tackling themes of racism and social justice with unflinching honesty and nuance,"(p.145). He continues, "Through Justyce's story, Stone sheds light on the ways in which systemic racism can have devastating consequences for Black youth, and highlights the importance of resistance, activism, and community in the face of oppression (p.112).

Both Smith (2021) and Brooks (2022) offer compelling analyses of Nic Stone's *Dear Martin*, highlighting its impactful exploration of systemic racism, and Black identity. Through its innovative epistolary format and nuanced characterization, the novel provides a powerful commentary on the complexities of racial identity and the struggles faced by Black youth in America. However, despite the ongoing police violence against African Americans, the representation of police power and violence in African American literature is under examined. The representation of this issue is yet to be fully explored in African American literary scenes.

This article uses critical race theory which centres on the experiences of marginalised groups, particularly people of colour, and their relationship to systems of power. Derrick Bell argues that racism is a permanent feature of American society and that the legal system plays a significant role in perpetuating racial inequality. He challenges traditional liberal approaches to civil rights and argues that the law is not a neutral instrument but reflects dominant groups' interests and power (Bell, 1973). Bell's interest in convergence theory is essential to critical race theory. It argues that progress is not made because of an inherent commitment to equality or justice but because it serves powerful groups' interests. Racial progress is fragile and can be reversed or undermined when it no longer serves those interests.

Critical race theory provides a framework for understanding and addressing police violence against African Americans as a manifestation of systemic racism in the United States. Critical race theory scholars argue that police violence against black communities is not an aberration but rather a predictable outcome of a system that is built upon and produces white supremacy. The persistent racial

disparities in policing and criminal justice are not simply a matter of individual prejudice or individual failings but rather the result of policies and practices that intentionally target and marginalise black communities.

Police Power and Violence in *Dear Martin*

Dear Martin (2017) is a 'police violence' novel by Nick Stone. The story follows Justyce McAllister, a 17-year-old African American high school student who is falsely accused of a crime and brutally beaten by a police officer. As Justyce navigates the aftermath of this traumatic event, he begins writing letters to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., grappling with the harsh realities of racial injustice and police violence. Through his letters, Justyce explores his identity, relationships, and activism, all while seeking guidance from Dr. King's teachings.

The article examines police power and violence, which are intricately intertwined, highlighting the systemic racism and oppression faced by African Americans. It is argued that, "police power perpetuates a culture of white innocence that obscures systemic racism" (Yancy, 2017, p. 42). The novel illustrates how police officers wield power to assert dominance over Black bodies, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and bias. Police power is wielded as a tool of oppression, specifically targeting Black individuals because of their racial identity. Justyce McAllister's encounters with law enforcement exemplify this dynamic, as officers profile, harass, and brutalise him solely based on his racial identity.

Police power and violence are starkly illustrated through Justyce's experiences and reflections. Initially, Justyce believes his non-"thuggish" appearance will spare him from unfair treatment, thinking, "I do not sag my pants or wear my clothes super big. I go to a good school and have goals and vision and a great head-on my shoulders," as Mama likes to say" (p. 24). However, he soon realises his Black identity alone makes him a target. The novel highlights systemic racism through the tragic example of Shemar Carson, an unarmed Black teenager killed by a white officer who claimed Shemar threatened him with a gun. This incident

echoes Alexander's (2010) observations, "The problem has been perpetuated by systemic racism, implicit bias, lack of accountability, and failure to address the root causes of such violence" (p. 24).

Justyce tells Martin Luther King, Jr. about the incident of police violence involving Shemar Carson, who is an armed black boy, saying, "The details are hazy," he admits, "Since there were not any witnesses." Justyce explains that it is pretty clear that a white police officer shot and killed Shemar without just cause." This cop shot an unarmed kid," Justyce writes. "Four times. Even fishier, according to the medical examiners, there was a two-hour gap between the estimated time of death and when the cop called it in (p.48). Justyce notes that he did not pay much attention to this story before his run-in with Castillo. Now, though, he cannot stop thinking about it. Shemar was a good student and overall respected young man, but the police officer insists that he found Shemar stealing a car and that, when he tried to stop him, Shemar reached for his gun.

Justyce's encounter with police violence begins when he tries to help his intoxicated ex-girlfriend, Melo. Despite his good intentions, Officer Castillo assumes the worst, saying, "I knew you were up to no good when I saw you walking down the street with your hood up" (p.18). Castillo accuses Justyce of attacking Melo, handcuffs him, and slaps him, saying, "I know your kind: punks like you wander the streets of nice neighbourhoods searching for prey"(p.24). Justyce's attempts to explain are met with hostility. This incident illustrates systemic racism and police distrust of Black people, reinforcing the notion that Black people are inherently criminal; as (Davis, 2016) notes, "Racial profiling is a mechanism that reinforces the notion that Black people are inherently criminal, and therefore, deserving of surveillance and punishment"(p. 17).

Justyce's reflection on Tavarrius's tragic fate underscores the devastating consequences of systemic racism in the criminal justice system, "Tavarrius was seventeen... He was unarmed... He was shot and killed by a cop" (p. 120), Justyce notes, highlighting the racial biases and prejudices that

perpetuate a cycle of violence and mistrust. Tavarrius's story resonates with countless others, including Justice, who must navigate a society where their skin colour renders them vulnerable to harassment, violence, and even death. This poignant example illustrates how police power and violence are enabled by systemic failures, perpetuating a culture of fear and oppression. Through Tavarrius's story, Stone humanises the victims of police violence, emphasising the urgent need for reform and accountability.

Stone illustrates another instance of police power and violence when Manny and Justyce face aggression from an off-duty officer, Garrett Tison, over loud music. The officer gets angrier as he looks at them. As Davis (2026) argues, "the police officer's gaze is informed by a history of racism and oppression, perpetuating suspicion and punishment (Davis, 2016, p.23). Manny refuses to turn down the music, saying, "Man, please. This is my car. I am done bending over backwards to appease white people" (p.216). The situation escalates, with Tison yelling racial slurs and ultimately shooting Manny and Justyce, killing Manny. This tragic event compounds the pervasive police violence in the US, highlighting systemic racism and the intertwining of racism with governance. Stone based this plot point on the real-life shooting of Jordan Davis, a 17-year-old Black boy murdered over loud music in 2012.

This incident makes Justyce and the black community more terrified of the police. This is because the police always have a wrong opinion of the black community. As shown in the novel, the police constantly wrongfully assault black people just because they look suspicious. The biggest concern is with police violence, as Justyce has to learn how to live in a community where he can be wrongfully assaulted or killed by a police officer at any moment. Stone uses the fictional Shemar Carson and Tavarrius Jenkins to represent the many instances of police violence against young black men in the news every month. In an interview with book blogger Sharon Levin, Nick Stone explains that she did not want to tread on the private grief and suffering of the families of real victims. However, she also wanted to pay tribute to the real-life

tragedies behind her novel: "The Daily Life of a Seventeen-year-old African American Boy in the Thick of his Senior Year of High School. Trayvon Martin was seventeen. Jordan Davis was seventeen. Mike Brown was eighteen and killed eight days after graduating from high school. Moreover, before their deaths, these boys were just... boys" (p.19). In the novel, Shemar and Tavarrius are the fictional counterparts for this long list of ordinary young men killed in extraordinary and unjust circumstances. Although neither character appears in the book, their stories unfold in the background, proving that Justyce's situation is not an outlier but part of a more significant problem of systemic injustice and racial profiling.

Through these tragic events, Stone highlights the lack of accountability for police officers responsible for the deaths of Shemar Carson, Tavarrius Jenkins, Manny, and others, which is a stark reminder of the systemic injustice perpetuating police violence. The novel highlights how police officers are rarely held accountable for their actions, perpetuating a culture of impunity. As Justyce notes, "Another unarmed Black boy... another cop walks free" (p.137). This pattern of non-accountability is echoed in the real world, where, according to a report by the National Police Foundation, "only 1% of police killings result in officers being charged" (p.24). The lack of consequences for police violence is further underscored by Justyce's mom, who says, "They always get away with it... They always get to go home to their families" (p.163). This impunity perpetuates systemic racism, reinforcing the notion that Black lives hold little value. As Davis argues, "The refusal to hold police officers accountable... is a manifestation of the racialised social order" (Davis, 2003, p. 35). The failure to hold officers accountable for these deaths serves as a painful reminder of the entrenched nature of systemic racism and police power.

Ultimately, the novel humanises the victims of police violence, emphasising the urgent need for reform. Justyce writes in his letters to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "We still got work to do, Dr. King... We still got a long way to go" (p. 257). Justyce's poignant statement is a heartfelt acknowledgement

that despite the progress made in the Civil Rights Movement, systemic racism and police violence persist, perpetuating a cycle of oppression that continues to disenfranchise and marginalise communities of colour. Through his experiences, Justyce has come to realise that the struggles Dr. King fought against during his lifetime - racial profiling, police violence, and systemic oppression - remain entrenched in society, manifesting in the tragic deaths of Shemar Carson, Tavarrius Jenkins and his friend Manny at the hands of law enforcement. These incidents serve as stark reminders of the ongoing struggle for true equality, underscoring the notion that the legacy of racism and discrimination has yet to be fully confronted or dismantled. Justyce's words convey his sense of responsibility to continue Dr. King's legacy, striving for a future where Black lives are valued and protected and where the content of one's character supersedes the colour of one's skin.

Institutionalised Racism and Criminal Systemic Injustice

Stone exposes the police department's systemic failure, perpetuating institutionalised racism through unjust killings and lack of accountability. Victims like Shemar Carson, Tavarrius Jenkins, and Manny are demonised, with their pasts scrutinised to deflect attention. A local newspaper quotes Tison's neighbour: "The man was defending himself from thugs... If he says those boys had a gun, they had a gun" (p. 224). This media spin obscures the truth, sympathetic to Officer Tison. The department's leadership ignores community outrage, dismissing reform calls. By failing to hold officers accountable, they perpetuate impunity, emboldening excessive force against Black teenagers. Police killings of unarmed Black teens spark national conversations on systemic racism, police violence, and media influence. The novel highlights silence, dismissal, or justification surrounding Black youth deaths, entrenching racial tensions.

The novel critiques media perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and biases, obscuring Black humanity. A 2020 National Association of Black Journalists study found that news outlets prioritise authoritative voices over marginalised communities. The novel illustrates

this through a pundit's assumptions on Channel 5 News at five about Justyce's life based on limited information and a news anchor's speculation about his moral character (p. 140-143). Justyce notes, "The media always makes us out to be the bad guys... They never show the whole story" (p.145). Doc, Justyce's teacher, emphasises that slander against Justyce stems from discomfort with truth, saying, "That idiot 'pundit' would rather believe you and Manny were thugs than believe a twenty-year veteran cop made a snap judgment based on skin colour," he continues, "He identifies with the cop. If the cop is capable of murder, it means he is capable of the same," (p.260). This echoes Michelle Alexander's argument, "Media representation of police violence can either reinforce or disrupt the dominant narrative, influencing public opinion and policy," (Alexander, 2010, p.156). Stone highlights the need for accurate and nuanced media representation, amplifying marginalised voices and challenging dominant narratives to promote justice, empathy, and understanding.

The criminal justice system faces intense criticism for perpetuating racial disparities, mass incarceration, and police violence against African Americans. At its core lies the system's failure to hold police accountable, fueled by their immense power and a culture of protection and silence. This power imbalance allows officers to act with impunity, perpetuating systemic racism and dehumanising stereotypes. Ta-Nehisi Coates observes, "The pursuit of justice... is not the same as the pursuit of vengeance. And the former requires accounting for the humanity of those who have been harmed" (2015, p. 81). The system's failure to indict officers responsible for police violence stems from systemic racism, police power, and institutional corruption. Racial biases lead to unequal outcomes, while compromised investigations and prosecutorial discretion influenced by societal attitudes and biases also contribute to the lack of indictment. Stone illustrates this through the contrasting cases of Shemar Carson and Garrett Tison. While Tison is indicted and convicted of aggravated assault and misdemeanours, the jury fails to convict him of murder, highlighting the justice system's perpetuation of police violence and impunity. Ta-

Nehisi Coates words resonate, "The pursuit of justice, particularly for the Black community, is often a pursuit of avoidance - avoidance of the police, avoidance of violence, avoidance of being made to feel like a perpetual suspect" (Coates, 2015, p. 123). Quan's story underscores this disparity, recounting a white teenager who murdered his father but served only 60 days in juvenile detention. At the same time, Quan received a year-long sentence for petty theft: "Why try to do right if people will always look at me and assume wrong?" (p. 280). This systemic failure underscores the need for radical reform and reckoning to address deep-seated racial injustice.

The JAM (Justice for Justyce and Manny) protest garners nationwide support, fueled by outrage over Manny's senseless death and empathy for his grieving family. As Justyce observes, "People from diverse backgrounds unite to demand change, driven by shared experiences of racial injustice and a desire for reform" (p. 231). The protest becomes a powerful symbol of resistance against systemic racism and police violence, resonating deeply with marginalised communities. By standing in solidarity, supporters across the nation convey their commitment to creating a more just society, recognising the urgent need for policy changes and social reforms to prevent similar tragedies. Justyce acknowledges the transformative power of collective action as the movement gains momentum, underscoring the potential for meaningful change. This shows Justyce that many people believe in his innocence since many groups nationwide have started wearing "Justice for JAM shirt."

Conclusion

Stone's work highlights the emotional toll of injustice, community resilience, and the pursuit of justice, amplifying social commentary. As Feagin states, "We whites created slavery, Jim Crow segregation and contemporary racial discrimination... Whites are the main racial villains... with most of the political and social power to change that racial discrimination and inequality" (Feagin, 2014, p. 44). He argues that whites must confront and dismantle their privilege and power to achieve genuine democracy and equality. Similarly Martin

Luther King advocates for radical structural changes, saying, "Justice for black people will not flow into this society merely from court decisions nor from fountains of political oratory... White Americans must recognise that justice for black people cannot be achieved without radical changes in the structure of our society," (King, 1960 p. 26). These perspectives underscore the need for collective action to address systemic racism and achieve true liberty and justice for all.

The article has provided an in-depth examination of police power and violence in African American literature, specifically focusing on Nick Stone's *Dear Martin*. Through a critical race theory framework, the article has demonstrated how the novel represents police power and violence intersecting with identity, functioning as literary activism and contributing to the ongoing conversation within African American literature.

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